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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

9 February 1984

NOTE FOR: Dave Low, NIO/AL  
FROM: Hal Ford, NIO/AL  
SUBJECT: The DCI's Annual Report

Dave, some very quick thoughts for your piece on "The Scope of the Intelligence Challenge." I defer on all points to the judgments of the NIOs whose portfolios encompass the following, but I send on these thoughts, anyway, simply as secondings of a few nominations re new emphases in the past three years:

1. The centrality of Soviet causation in world developments.

- There has clearly been a heightening of already significant Intelligence Community tendency to view the world in essentially East-West terms. This heightened focus has had both positive and negative results. On the plus side, many analysts who deal in local or regional matters (especially relevant in Third World cases) have had their perspectives broadened to appreciate better how Soviet or pro-Soviet exploitation of given questions often translates faraway or seemingly secondary issues into matters of considerable consequence for US security interests. In result, policymakers have been given a much better sense of (a) how scattered Soviet actions may in fact reflect greater overall planning or coordination on the part of the Soviets (especially re global reach) than has previously been appreciated; and (b) how in many Third World situations, US decision making must grind in the factor of the consequences for Soviet or pro-Soviet exploitation, in cases where one option is for the US to lessen its own commitment.
- On the negative side, heightened East-West focus has in some instances tended to obscure the basic driving forces behind certain Third World crises, and to focus US remedial policies on "causes" of unrest that in part miss the point. Prime examples: (a) it is not alone Communist plotting or gun-running that is responsible for El Salvador's distress but also the long-standing doleful conditions there that have bred revolution; and (b) US unease over Soviet-allied Syria should not so dominate US concerns that policymakers dismiss clear intelligence warnings and proceed to place US chips on the weak

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and losing cause of Gemayel. Central America and Lebanon are not Vietnams, but there is danger that the huge price the US paid there for its ignorance of local history, culture, values, factions, antagonisms, etc., will in part be repeated in Central America and Lebanon -- in the event US over-concentration on East-West perspectives clouds appreciation of basic causations at work.

2. Soviet use of surrogates. There has clearly been a greater emphasis here, and mostly for the good. A much better appreciation has been gained of how the Soviets have put together, use, and hide behind this formidable instrument; and US security policymakers are now much more sensitive to how Cuban and other surrogate military capabilities have to be considered in various possible war scenarios. At the same time, however, there remains a tendency on the part of some officers to lump all of these surrogates together, treating them as Soviet stooges, rather than carefully following how and where their various interests coincide and do not coincide with those of the USSR, and how and where serious differences exist. Yugoslavia, China, Egypt, and Somalia were once widely viewed as being simply Soviet puppets; US policy must not lose sight of possible future opportunities re the likes of Mozambique's and other of the USSR's current crop of surrogates.

3. International terrorism.

- An obvious candidate, but with some shortcomings. The intelligence community was very slow in anticipating the upsurge in terrorism that is occurring -- and will occur -- in the Near East. Why? I think this resulted in part from the fact that many of the analysts working these problems are from particular offices whose job it is to follow the details of this and that terrorist group, rather than to approach the question from a broader perspective. Hence there has not been sufficient sensitivity to broad political-military developments, the role of the USG therein, and the existence of so many various kinds of US enemies in the area who wish to strike back by using such means -- terrorism -- as they have at hand. With this has also been a slowness to appreciate the incendiary potentials of Iranian fundamentalism and Tehran-backed terrorist actions.
- Another shortcoming re the intelligence community and terrorism: the continuing failure to make a sustained and substantial analytical attack on the question of the USSR's relationships with international terrorism. I have run into this question repeatedly in estimates over the past three years, and I was doing some probing into the subject (DDO, DDI, OIA, and NPIC) prior to Dave Whipple's arrival. The main problem I have encountered is that many of the officers who from time to time work the problem (a) have long ago come to a kind of mind-set that because we can't document a Soviet connection, it doesn't exist; and (b) do not consider the broader questions of circumstantial evidence and cui bono?. This Soviet angle is even more important today because of Syria's role in terrorism, and Syria's ties with the USSR. Moscow's surrogates have surrogates; does this absolve Moscow of a role in Near East (and other) terrorism? We don't know. But we should damn well try harder to

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find out. Admittedly these problems are tough, but CIA will be derelict if it doesn't give this Soviet question the care it deserves. Dave may or may not agree, I don't know.

4. Third World political instabilities. Increased attention has been given to these questions in NIEs and in on-going, greatly expanded efforts on the part of OGI. A lot of improved product, of some interest to some senior policymakers, and of more interest to working level analysts and policymakers. Two continuing problems, however: (a) the necessary radical improvements needed in collection (mostly on the part of State and CIA) have not been put in motion; and (b) the bettered analysis on these questions seems to take a back seat to East-West considerations (as above) in much senior policymaking.

5. Increasing Soviet military reach in the world. Definitely more attention has been given these questions -- in various studies and regional NIEs, and now a big global NIE on this subject. Very needed and very constructive. Results have been (a) a greater appreciation of the scope of these Soviet military efforts, and their better coordination with total Soviet efforts in particular Third World settings; and (b) closer ties of national intelligence to US commands in the field -- and their given missions.

6. Social movements and generational politics in Western Europe. Clearly more attention being given, with resulting increased appreciation of associated long-term problems of neutralism and anti-Americanism.

7. Soviet vulnerabilities. There has been some increased attention given here, especially re Eastern European reliabilities, and civil disorders/ethnic strife within the USSR. Much more is needed.

8. Contingency and what-if? studies. Some increased emphasis on these much-needed types of endeavors; more is needed.

9. Vulnerability studies. Intelligence has been successful not only in preparing such useful endeavors, but in making them highly policy-relevant without distorting the mission or integrity of intelligence.

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